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8
NIGHT OF THE OWLS
PRELUDE!
NIGHTWING
THE NEW 52!
HIGGINS
BARROWS
JOSÉ
FERREIRA
JUN 2012
RATED T TEEN
EDDY BARROWS
ROD REIS
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GOTHAM CITY, 1910.
THIS IS A STORY ABOUT LOVE.
ABOUT SACRIFICE.
ABOUT BETRAYAL.
THIS IS THE STORY...
...OF HOW THE MAN I WILL KILL TONIGHT IS GOTHAM'S WORST BETRAYER OF ALL.
After witnessing the deaths of his parents as a boy, Dick Grayson was taken under Batman's wing, becoming Robin, the Boy Wonder. But when the Boy Wonder became a man, he shed the identity of Robin and branded himself as...
NIGHTWING
BLOODLINES
KYLE HIGGINS WRITER
EDDY BARROWS PENCILS
RUY JOSÉ & EBER FERREIRA INKS
ROD REIS COLORS
PAT BROSSEAU LETTERS
BARROWS & REIS COVER
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NIGHTWING CREATED BY MARV WOLFMAN AND GEORGE PÉREZ

DURING THE CENTURY'S TURN, GOTHAM CITY WAS A WONDERFUL PLACE IN WHICH TO GROW UP.
THAT IS, ASSUMING YOU WERE A CHILD OF THE CITY.
AND NOT JUST ONE WHO LIVED THERE.
I WAS BORN ON THE TENTH OF OCTOBER, IN THE YEAR NINETEEN HUNDRED AND ONE. I WAS NOT A CHILD OF GOTHAM.
AFTER ALL, TO BE SUCH A THING WOULD HAVE REQUIRED MY FATHER TO BE A MEMBER OF GOTHAM'S HIGH SOCIETY, AND NO ONE REPRESENTED THAT BETTER THAN THESE FOUR MEN.
ALAN WAYNE...
...FREDERIC COBBLEPOT...
...EDWARD ELLIOT...
...AND BURTON CROWNE.
THE ELITE OF GOTHAM.
COME ALONG, AMELIA. IT'S TIME TO GO.

MY FATHER WAS AN IRONWORKER, LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM.
HE SPENT MOST OF HIS YEARS CONSTRUCTING BRIDGES FOR THE GATE BROTHERS AND THE POWERFUL FAMILIES OF THE CITY.
WHEN CAMERON KANE'S BRIDGE COLLAPSED MIDWAY THROUGH CONSTRUCTION, MY FATHER LOST HIS LIFE.
AND I LOST MY CHILDHOOD.
I OFTEN POINT TO THESE YEARS AS HAVING THE MOST PROFOUND EFFECT ON WHAT I WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME.
JUGGLING FOR PENNIES WHILE SURROUNDED BY THE "EXTRAVAGANCE" OF GOTHAM.
HOW MUCH MORE HOPELESS CAN ONE FEEL?

MY MOTHER SPENT HER DAYS WORKING IN A TEXTILE PLANT.
THOUGH I WAS NOT OLD ENOUGH TO BE ON MY OWN, WE HADN'T THE MONEY FOR ANYONE TO LOOK AFTER ME.
WE BARELY HAD MONEY FOR FOOD.
EVEN STILL, MY MOTHER HAD WARNED ABOUT "BEGGING." SHE HAD FORBIDDEN ME FROM BEING ON STREET CORNERS.
BUT HOW COULD I DO NOTHING?
IT CONTINUED LIKE THAT FOR MONTHS.
AND WELL INTO THE NEXT YEAR.

UNTIL A CHANCE OCCURRENCE CHANGED EVERYTHING.
HEY!
WHA--?
AAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
THUNK
UGH!
IMPRESSIVE AIM, SON...*QUITE* IMPRESSIVE.
THANK YOU, SIR.
I WONDER...
...HOW MIGHT YOU FEEL ABOUT A *CHANGE* IN VENUES?

GOTHAM CITY. PRESENT DAY.
Even with everything that's happened the past few weeks, this one hurts. A lot.
The Strayhorn Brothers--a double murder in Old Gotham last week.
Beaten to death with one of my Escrima sticks.
Of course, whenever a "Bat" weapon turns up like this, the media circus is never far behind.
Like the Rossini murder last year.
Except it's been a week without word of the murder weapon hitting the media at all.
So...
Incoming transmission from Alfred Pennyworth.
DEET DEET
...what's different about you?
TO ALL THE ALLIES OF THE BAT PRESENTLY IN GOTHAM...

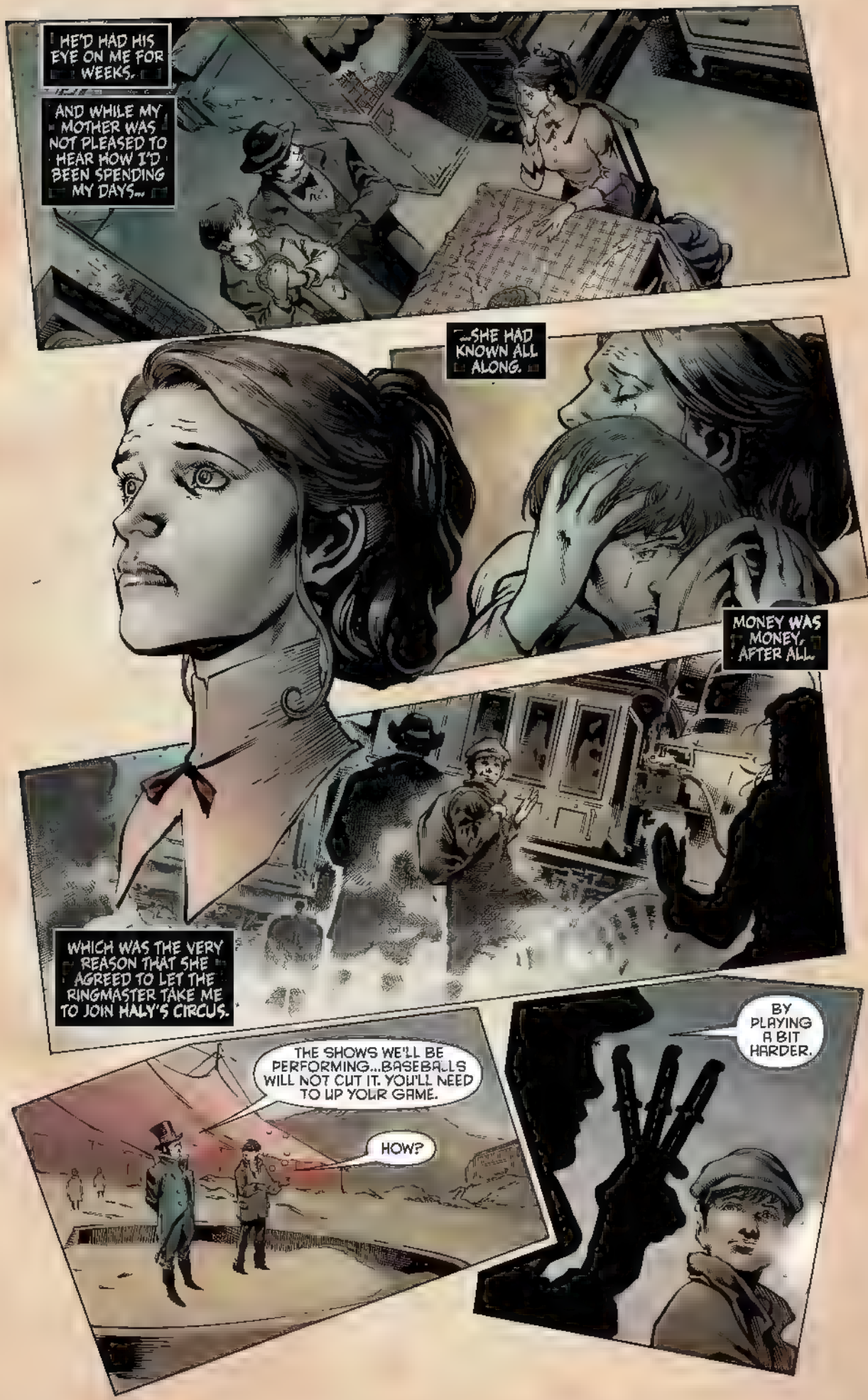
NIGHT OF THE OWLS, 7:40 PM...
...I SEND THIS WITH THE GREATEST URGENCY.
TONIGHT, THE COURT OF OWLS HAS SENT THEIR ASSASSINS TO KILL NEARLY FORTY PEOPLE ACROSS THE CITY.
WHA--?
THE COURT'S TARGETS ARE ALL GOTHAM LEADERS. PEOPLE WHO SHAPE THIS CITY.

I HAVE UPLOADED A LIST OF THE TARGETS' NAMES, HERE.
THE COURT'S ASSASSINS, THE "TALONS," ARE ALREADY EN ROUTE TO THEIR TARGETS.
ARKHAM A.
HEAD AND
DIRECTOR --
JEREMIAH
ARKHAM
GOTHAM CITY
MAYOR --
SEBASTIAN
GOTHAM C
DEPUTY
THOMAS
KAVAN
GOTH
CO
R
THEY ARE HIGHLY TRAINED KILLERS WITH EXTRAORDINARY REGENERATIVE ABILITIES.
FOR MANY OF THEIR TARGETS, I FEAR IT MAY BE TOO LATE--
I WILL KEEP THE--
BANG!
BANG!
--KEEP THE LINE TO THE CAVE OPEN AS LONG AS I CAN MANAGE.
The Strayhorn Brothers will have to wait.
ALFRED-- I'M AT THE G.C.P.D. NOW, BUT THIS PLACE IS FORT KNOX COMPARED TO CITY HALL. COMMISSIONER GORDON HAS AN ARMY WITH HIM HERE.
I CAN GET TO MAYOR HADY IN FIVE MINUTES--

"--LET'S PRAY THAT'S *FAST* ENOUGH!"
CITY HALL
I'M TELLING YOU RIGHT NOW, MAYOR HADY--
--IT'LL PASS THE COUNCIL VOTE. I MEAN, IT'LL TAKE A BIT A' FINESSE. REDISTRICTING THE EQUIVALENT OF SLUM LAND *JUST* TO PREVENT BRUCE WAYNE FROM REBUILDING ISN'T EXACTLY AN EASY--
THANK YOU, COUNCILMAN DAVIS. I'VE NOTED YOUR OPINION. BUT RIGHT NOW I'M MORE INTERESTED IN DEPUTY MAYOR KAVANAUGH'S ANSWERING MY *ORIGINAL* QUESTION.
SIR?
STOP DANCING AND GIVE ME AN *ANSWER*, THOMAS. CAN I *COUNT* ON YOU IN ALL THIS? CAN THIS GODFORSAKEN CITY COUNT ON YOU?
SHOOOM
WHAT THE HELL?
I'LL GO TALK TO SECURITY.
I'VE GOT FIVE DOLLARS THAT SAYS NOBODY TOLD THEM WE WERE STILL--

WHAT... THE--
SCHUNK
MAYOR SEBASTIAN HADY--FOR YOUR CORRUPTION AND BETRAYAL OF GOTHAM...
...THE COURT OF OWLS HAS SENTENCED YOU TO DIE!

Damnit, I'm too late.
Councilman Davis and at least two...three security guards I can see in the hall--dead.
WELL, WELL, WELL... WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?
THE BAT'S LITTLE BIRDIE COME OUT TO PLAY WITH THE OWLS? HOW FUN FOR ME.
SORRY
--NOT QUITE.
KRAAAK
HA HA HA. YOU MUST PLAY HARDER THAN THAT, LITTLE BIRDIE.
POP
I PLAY MUCH HARDER.
KRAK
Kck snapped all the tendons in his knees. Regeneration takes time. he shouldn't be able to--


HE'D HAD HIS EYE ON ME FOR WEEKS.
AND WHILE MY MOTHER WAS NOT PLEASED TO HEAR HOW I'D BEEN SPENDING MY DAYS...
...SHE HAD KNOWN ALL ALONG.
MONEY WAS MONEY, AFTER ALL.
WHICH WAS THE VERY REASON THAT SHE AGREED TO LET THE RINGMASTER TAKE ME TO JOIN HALY'S CIRCUS.
THE SHOWS WE'LL BE PERFORMING...BASEBALLS WILL NOT CUT IT. YOU'LL NEED TO UP YOUR GAME.
HOW?
BY PLAYING A BIT HARDER.

THE NEXT FEW YEARS ARE A BIT OF A BLUR.
CITY AFTER CITY, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.
I HAD NOT BECOME GOOD...
...I HAD BECOME SPECTACULAR.

AS THE YEARS WENT BY, MY REPUTATION GREW.
ONCE A CHILD LIVING IN GOTHAM...
...I HAD MANAGED TO BECOME A CHILD OF GOTHAM.
AND WITH THAT CHANGE, SO CAME OTHERS.
HER NAME WAS AMELIA, AND DURING ONE OF HALY'S ANNUAL STAYS IN GOTHAM...
...WE FELL IN LOVE.

WHAT--WHAT IS THAT THING?!
THEY CALL IT A TALON--HE'S AN ASSASSIN FOR THE COURT OF OWLS, HERE TO KILL YOU!
THE COURT?! BUT THAT'S A FAIRY TALE! THEY'RE NOT REAL!
REALLY? YOU WANT TO ARGUE ABOUT THAT NOW?
JUST KEEP MOVING!
YES, RUN, RUN AWAY, LITTLE BIRDIE! RUN, RUN--
GHN!
Need to keep him occupied long enough for the Mayor to get out.
Long enough to make sure no one else dies here today.
No matter what it takes.
SO... WHERE WERE WE?
OH, YOU WANT TO CHALLENGE ME TO A SWORD FIGHT? IS THAT IT?
I'VE BEEN TRAINED BY THE BEST FIGHTERS ON THE PLANET.

GOOD. SO HAVE I.
SKLASH!
ARGH!
UHN!
...BUT NOT NEARLY GOOD ENOUGH!
GAH!!
HRK
YOU'RE GOOD...

...VERY DISAPPOINTING INDEED.
WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY...
VERY DISAPPOINTING, LITTLE BIRDIE...
...I GLESS I'M NO OWL.
NNN!
YEAH... LET'S SEE YOU REGENERATE AROUND THAT...

ALTHOUGH SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF BURTON CROWNE, MY RELATIONSHIP WITH AMELIA WAS EASY FROM THE START.
WE WERE HAPPY TOGETHER.
TWO CHILDREN IN LOVE.
IN HINDSIGHT, THAT WAS REALLY THE BEGINNING OF THE END.
EVEN THOUGH NEITHER OF US KNEW IT.
IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, EVERYTHING WAS STRIPPED AWAY.

AT THE TIME IT FELT LIKE THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL.
YOU KILLED HIM...?
HE WAS ALREADY DEAD. THE STICK'S JUST PREVENTING HIS HEALING FACTOR FROM KICKING IN.
WHAM
STILL, WE SHOULD HURRY UP AND--
BUT IT WOULD BE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE BETRAYAL I'LL WITNESS HERE TONIGHT.
HRK!
THUNK
BECAUSE THIS BETRAYAL TAKES EVERYTHING I SACRIFICED AND MAKES IT WORTHLESS.
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THIS BETRAYAL IS FROM MY OWN DESCENDANT. WHICH IS WHY I, WILLIAM COBB...
NO...

...AM HERE TO KILL RICHARD GRAYSON.
NEXT ISSUE:
THE NIGHT OF THE OWLS FEATURING THE GRAYSONS OF GOTHAM!
FOLLOW THE NIGHT OF THE OWLS CROSSOVER IN THE BAT BOOKS NEXT MONTH!

KYLE HIGGINS JOE BENNETT
DEATH STROKE™
DC COMICS
THE NEW 52
MONTHLY
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SCORPION

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